

SCHOOL CLOSURES & ADAPTIVE REUSE

A Market Analysis for the Adaptive Reuse of Gaston School in Gaston, NC



Katrese Hale
Department of City and Regional Planning, UNC-CH
April 2018

This page is intentionally left blank

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	IV
List of Tables	IV
Chapter 1- Introduction	1
1.1 Problem Statement	1
1.2 Research Questions	1
1.3 Research Scope & Limitations	1
1.4 Relevance of Research	1
1.5 Report Outline	2
Chapter 2- Literature Review	3
2.1 Introduction	3
2.2 The Value of Schools	3
2.3 Impact of School Closures on Rural Communities	4
2.4 Adaptive Reuse: Definition, Benefits and Limitations	4
Chapter 3- Methods	6
3.1 Data Collection & Analysis	6
3.1.1 Literature Review	6
3.1.2 Site and Community Profile	6
3.1.3 Parcel Analysis	6
3.1.4 Market Analysis	6
Chapter 4- Results	7
4.1 Site and Community Profile	7
4.1.1 Key Demographic Trends and Status Indicators	7
4.1.2 Project Stakeholders	9
4.1.3 Project Site	10
4.1.4 Past & Existing Adaptive Reuse Projects	12
4.1.5 Summary of Site and Community Profile	12
4.2 Parcel Analysis	14
4.2.1 Land Use	14
4.2.2 Ownership	14
4.2.3 Recent Sales	15
4.2.4 Summary of Parcel Analysis	15

4.3 Market Analysis	16
4.3.1 Retail	16
4.3.2 Residential	16
4.3.3 Office	17
4.3.4 Summary of Market Analysis	17
Chapter 5- Conclusions & Recommendations	18
5.1 Summary of Research Questions Findings	18
5.2 Recommendations	18
References	20
Data Sources	21

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1 Perry's Neighborhood Unit
Figure 4-1 Project Site
Figure 4-2 Front Entrance View
Figure 4-3 Rear View
Figure 4-4 Town Center
Figure 4-5 Land Use Map
Figure 4-6 Town of Gaston Recent Sales
Figure 4-7 Market Study Area
Figure 4-8 Leakage/Surplus Factor by Industry Subsectors

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1 Key Demographic Trends
Table 4-2 Key Employment and Income Indicators
Table 4-3 Major Employers in Northampton County
Table 4-4 Major Owners by Number of Properties
Table 4-5 Major Owner by Total Property Tax Values
Table 4-6 Housing Units by Occupancy Status and Tenure

1.1 Problem Statement

Gaston School is historically significant for its contributions to education and Modernist Architecture in the small town of Gaston. Gaston School was the first consolidated school built in the Town of Gaston during the late 1920s in accordance with state mandates. Gaston School also played a pivotal role in the racial integration of public schools in Northampton County. As the county's population grew, a new high school was constructed around 1990 and Gaston School was used as the middle school until closed by the county in 2001 when a new middle school was built. Gaston School currently sits underutilized with the potential to be revive its historical significance through adaptive reuse.

Cities and towns all across the United States have been burdened with school closings for a myriad of reasons including, but not limited to, declining enrollments, aging school facilities and deficit budgets. In North Carolina, over 90 public schools have been closed within the last ten years (NCDPI, 2016). Northampton County's school enrollment declined by about 36.0% between 2007 and 2016. Since 2009, four elementary and secondary public schools have been closed in Northampton County. Of these 4 cases, two of the schools are located in Gaston, NC: Northampton High West and Squire Elementary (NCDPI, 2016). While the closure of these schools may have been inevitable, one wonders will these school sites become visual blemishes like the nearby Gaston School site?

More often than not, schools that were once filled with energy, pride and history become subjected to blight, reduced property values, and vandalism as they sit vacant and underutilized. Old school buildings ultimately become a symbol of decline and hopelessness. However, all hope does not have to be lost. Adaptively reusing an old neighborhood school building can breathe new life into a community. Given the importance of this topic, I wish to learn from examining adaptive reuse of schools in Northampton County in order to conduct a market analysis for the historic Gaston School site. The problem this research paper seeks to investigate begins with how the school building is utilized following its closure.

1.2 Research Questions

This report will address the following questions:

- 1) How have closed schools been adaptively reused in Northampton County?
- 2) What is the market demand for the Gaston School site?

1.3 Research Scope & Limitations

This research project is an extension of research conducted on NC public school enrollment and school closures for my internship with the Institute of Transportation Research and Education at North Carolina State University. This report employs an exploratory approach to answer fundamental questions regarding the utilization of closed school buildings and the market demands for adaptively reusing a historic school site. Due to its rural setting, some data was limited or not available.

1.4 Relevance of the Research

This report will provide relevant stakeholders with information on opportunities for adaptively reusing the project site. This report will also shed light on the issue of school closure, its impacts

and adaptive reuse as a possible solution. This project will produce a plan that could be implemented. However, if the project is not implemented, I will be more knowledgeable about the topic and will have utilized and exemplified the skills I've gained throughout graduate school.

1.5 Report Outline

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the existing literature concerning school closures and adaptive reuse. Chapter 3 details the study methodology and data collection procedures. Chapter 4 offers the results of the research, organized by data collection method. The final chapter, Chapter 5, synthesizes and draws conclusions from the study findings, and offers recommendations for the moving forward with the adaptive reuse of the Gaston School.

2.1 Introduction

Research studies have shown that dilapidated schools have social, economic, physical and even psychological impacts on the local community, especially among rural and low-income communities.

2.2 The Value of Schools

As early as the 1920s, the importance of schools as the center of the neighborhood was recognized by municipal planning practices (Cranston, 2017). Clarence Perry's 'neighborhood unit' conceives schools and other communal institutions (churches, community centers) as anchors of the community by placing them at the center of the neighborhood. Perry believed that the school should be within walking distance of the neighborhood and that facilities and amenities associated with the school should service the entire community (Perry, 1929). This model is still widely influential in modern planning practice and in shaping contemporary suburban land planning norms (Mehaffy et al., 2015, Brody, 2013).

Schools have not only served as institutions for educating and learning but have offered resources to the community for social, recreational, health and personal needs (Lytton, 2011). Schools are "a unique kind of infrastructure" as they are publicly funded assets that provide physical value to a community by comprising a great amount of land and building stock and contribute to the social viability and health of a community, by functioning as quasi-public places where people meet, greet, and nurture social relations (Vincent, 2006, Witten et al., 2001). This is especially true in small or rural locations where schools are among the few public facilities that can provide meeting space, serve as recreation centers, and offer adult education (Lytton, 2011).

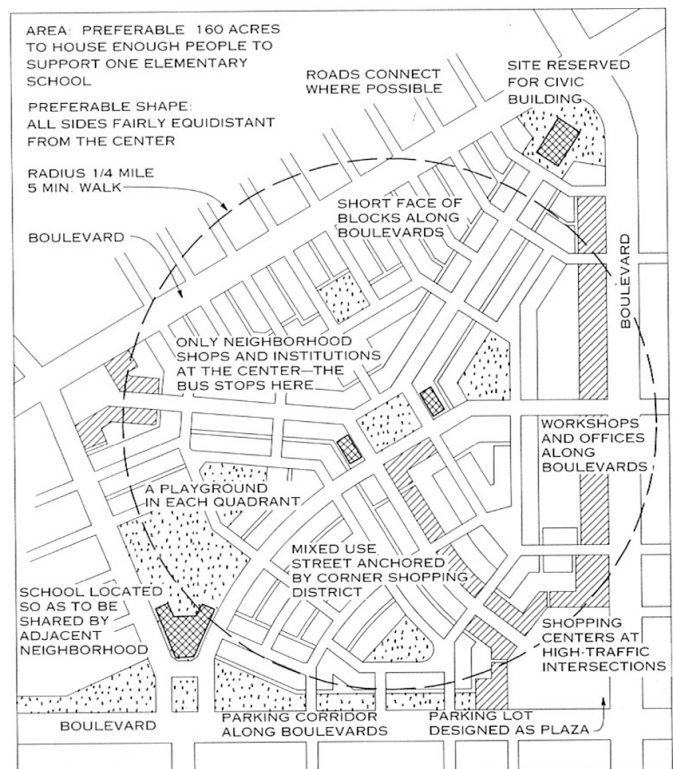


Figure 2-1: Perry's Neighborhood Unit

Schools have been regarded as historical anchors and cultural pillars to a community because of their heritage and long-standing presence in the neighborhood (Kearns et al., 2009). Schools hold a special intrinsic value because generations of people have passed through their doors, which creates notions of communal ownership of the building (Cranston, 2017). Historic schools were often built with the intention of establishing a community landmark; their stature, similar to that of historic lighthouses, railway stations or municipal buildings, represent the visual face of the community (Seaman, 2015). While their original function may be obsolete, schools are key landmarks that are important to preserve to reinforce a sense of community, identity and historical character (Seaman, 2015). It is important the educational and non- educational value of school buildings be made known in order to maintain their communal presence moving forward. "The presence of a school suggests the future, while the loss of a community school symbolizes a community in decline" (Kearns et al. 2009,p.136).

2.3 Impact of School Closures on Rural Communities

Many communities rely on schools to house health clinics, day care centers, after-school social programs, and so forth. Shuttering a school can therefore have widespread and lingering consequences for a neighborhood, often falling disproportionately on poorer communities” (Lytton, 2011). Closing a school has an impact beyond the simple loss of a building, and has negative repercussions for the community socially, economically, physically and even psychologically. In small towns, closing a local school can affect the viability of the community as a whole (People for Education, 2009). Schools often evolve into a center for other activities of the community; if that school is closed, the community has lost its center (Reycraft, 2016). These neighborhoods become less attractive to families that have school-age children; their residents can lose their sense of identity and confidence with the loss of a school building (Witten et al., 2001). From a planning policy perspective, school closures are a major concern for municipal governments whose planning objectives for inner cities (intensified forms of urban development, downtown revitalization, complete communities, etc.) are undermined when schools close (Ministry of Education, 2012; Filion & Bunting, 2010). The threat of a closure can cause a decline in municipal investment and economic development, as parents may be reluctant to enroll their children in a school that may soon be closed (Cranston, 2017). In effect, school closure can create a downward spiraling in the life of the community as a whole.

2.4 Adaptive Reuse: Definition, Benefits and Limitations

Adaptive reuse is defined as a way of preserving existing buildings through a change in the purpose of the building from what was originally intended. One fundamental characteristic of adaptive reuse is the conversion of a previously underused building to one that has an economically viable use (Cohen & Robbins, 2011).

The conversion of old industrial sites, brownfield redevelopment and infill development in core urban centers is how adaptive reuse first gained its popularity. During the early and mid-twentieth century, the decline in our industrial economy left a legacy of abandoned and underutilized sites across the country. Such buildings became valued as potential developments to improve and revitalize communities (Lytton, 2011). Policy makers, developers, and investors have increasingly become interested in the adaptive reuse of old buildings largely due to its economic benefits.

The simple act of recycling an empty or underutilized building provides environmental, social, and economic sustainability. It reduces energy consumption by eliminating the need to construct a new building or demolish an old one. Adaptive reuse maintains the site’s historical significance and its’ linkage to the past. Adaptive reuse also provides financial savings in energy costs. As adaptive reuse pertains to schools, Spector’s article *Creating Schools and Strengthening Communities through Adaptive Reuse* states that the adaptive reuse of school buildings can create valuable community resources from unproductive property, substantially reduce land acquisition and construction costs, revitalize existing neighborhoods, and help control sprawl (Spector, 2003).

While adaptive reuse of school buildings can be viewed as a promising way of restoring new life into a structure, it is no simple feat. Just as there are benefits, there are also many challenges. In particular, school districts’ abilities to find new uses for former school buildings have been affected by laws governing property disposition, the length of time that buildings have been closed, and the conditions of local real estate markets (Dowdall and Warner, 2013). Despite these difficulties, some districts have proposed and employed innovative ways to recycle vacant school buildings.

Research supports the historical significance of schools, school closures detrimental impact on

communities and the benefits of adaptive reuse of old school buildings. Research also supports that rural areas are dramatically affected by school closures. However, adaptive reuse has proven to provide results that could potentially reverse the rippling effects school closures have on small communities. This project seeks to add to academic literature on adaptively reusing a closed public school in a rural town.

3.1 Data Collection & Analysis

The purpose of this research is to explore the existing adaptive reuse of closed public school buildings and to analyze the market demands for adaptively reusing the Gaston School site. To achieve this, a mixed methods study was employed. Quantitative methods were used to broadly comprehend key trends and market demands for the Town of Gaston. Qualitative methods were used to explore the wants and needs of the community.

3.1.1 Literature Review

A review of academic literature was conducted to develop a broader understanding of the value of schools, the impact of school closures, and the implications of adaptive reuse. The literature review drew from books and peer-reviewed articles from relevant journals. A graduate-level report from Queen's School of Urban and Regional Planning was also used for the research. The full literature review can be found in Chapter 2.

3.1.2 Site and Community Profile

The site and community profile summarizes the social, economic and physical conditions, trends and indicators as well as the notable features of the site, community and region. Topics covered include: key demographics and status indicators, potential stakeholder groups, physical and environmental context of project site and past and existing plans and projects. Data sources include: American Community Survey (5-year Estimates), NC Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Reports and National Registry of Historic Places. The site and community profile can be found in Chapter 4 section 4.1.

3.1.3 Parcel Analysis

Northampton County's property tax parcel data was collected and analyzed to identify trends, patterns and themes related to key metrics (i.e. Land Use, Ownership, and Recent Sales) for the Town of Gaston. Northampton County parcel shapefiles were imported into ArcGIS software to and filtered to only display parcels within the Town of Gaston city limits. CSV files were then extracted to further analyze ownership by number of properties and property values, sale dates, and sale prices as well as to create a land use map. The results of the parcel analysis can be found Chapter 4.

3.1.4 Market Analysis

Esri Business Analyst was used to create reports that reflect demands in the market for the potential uses of the property. Analysis was performed for three primary uses: retail, residential, and office. Results of this analysis was used to inform the recommended program for the project site.

This chapter presents the results from the analysis of three sources of data: site and community profile, parcel analysis, and market analysis.

4.1 Site and Community Profile

A summary of the social, economic and physical conditions, trends and issues as well as the notable features of the community and region.

4.1.1 Key Demographic Trends and Status Indicators

Gaston is rural small town located in Northampton County, North Carolina. According to the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates the population as of 2016 was 1,162--an 16.5% decrease from its 2011 population. Similarly, the population of Northampton County decreased (~7%) from 22,120 in 2011 to 20,628 in 2016. Comparatively, both the population growth rates in both North Carolina (6.4%) and the United States have increased over this same time interval.

Age

The town of Gaston has an older population in comparison to the state. Both Gaston and Northampton County's population is a bit older than the state average (21% and 22.9% respectively, compared to 15.5% over 65 years of age) and the percentage of residents under age 18 (20.7% and 18.9% respectively) is lower than the state average. Interestingly, Gaston town's median age has been decreasing over time indicating either the rise of a younger population or the frequent deaths of the aging population.

Between 2011 and 2016, the percent of school-age children (5-18 years) in the Town of Gaston increased from 12.4% to 18.7% (+6.3%). This increase was largely due to a growth in the number of residents from age 5 to 9 years.

Race and Ethnicity

Despite a 4.0% decrease from 63% in 2011, the majority of the Gaston town population is Caucasian, with the white (not of Latino or Hispanic descent) population at 59.0% in 2016. Conversely, the percentage of racial minorities for Northampton County exceeds the Caucasian population. The African American population is both the largest and fastest growing minority population in Gaston. Between 2011 and 2016 the population grew from 31.9% to 35.1%, a 3.2% increase. In addition, the American Indian and Alaska Native population also exhibited growth during this period from 0% to 2.1%. Contrarily, the Hispanic and Latino population declined during this period, from 4.5% to 3.3% (-1.2%).

Table 4-1: Key Demographic Trends

Indicator	Gaston town	Northampton County	North Carolina
Population Percent Change 2011-2016	-16.5%	-6.7%	+5.5%
Percentage of Residents under 5	3.2%	4.7%	6.1%
Percentage of Residents	20.7%	18.9%	23.0%

under 18			
Percentage of Residents over 65	21.0%	22.9%	14.7%
Percentage of Racial Minority	41.0%	61.7%	36%

Housing Characteristics

The number of housing units in Gaston has decreased by 23% from 2011 to 2016. Of the 542 existing housing units in 2016, 482 were occupied (88.9%) and 60 were vacant (11.1%). The state follows a similar trend, but at the county level nearly a quarter of the housing units are vacant. In 2016, values for owner-occupied homes ranged from less than \$50,000 to \$1,000,000 or more, with a median value of \$52,600. Gaston town's median home value of \$52,600 is significantly lower than that of Northampton County (\$81,000) and North Carolina (\$157,100). In fact, the town's median home values have declined by about 18% since 2011.

Employment and Income

In 2016, the median household income in Gaston was \$30,833—about 48% lower than North Carolina. Despite being significantly lower than the state, Gaston's median household income has increased from \$28,625 in 2011 to \$30,833 in 2016, nearly an 8% increase over five years.

Unemployment has remained low in Gaston compared to the county but not the state. In 2016, the unemployment rate was 5.2%—down from 5.4% in 2011. Northampton County's unemployment rate decreased from 7.2% to 6.1% from 2011 to 2016 but remained higher than North Carolina's unemployment rate of 5.1% in 2016. Predictably, poverty rates in both Gaston and Northampton county exceed the state levels. However, poverty has increased in recent years. In 2011, 25.3% of Gaston lived in poverty, versus 21.9% in the county and 16.8% in the state. By 2016, Gaston's poverty rate increased to 31.5%, just slightly below the poverty rate of Northampton County (28.5%) and much greater than North Carolina (16.4%).

Table 4-2: Key Employment and Income Indicators

Indicator	Gaston Town	Northampton County	North Carolina
Unemployment Rate	5.2%	6.1%	5.1%
Median Household Income	\$30,833	\$31,543	\$59,667
Persons in Poverty	31.5%	28.5%	16.4%

Employment Sectors

In 2016, Gaston's top three industries were:

1. Retail Trade (20.1%);
2. Manufacturing (15.8%) and;
3. Education Services / Health Care and Social Assistance (14.9%);

In 2011, Gaston's top three industries were:

1. Manufacturing (15.6%)
2. Education Services / Health Care and Social Assistance (14.9%)
3. Arts / Entertainment / Recreation and Accommodation and Food Services & Public

Administration (11.8%)

There was a sudden boom in the retail industry within a 5-year period increasing by 11% from 2011. Both the manufacturing and education services / health care and social assistance industries remained roughly the same.

Major Employers

According to North Carolina Chamber of Commerce, the top 10 employers in Northampton County are listed in *Table 4-3* as of the 3rd Quarter, 2017.

Table 4-3: Major Employers in Northampton County

Rank	Company	Industry	Employment
1	LOWES HOME CENTERS INC	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	500-999
2	MEHERRIN AGRICULTURAL & CHEM CO	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	250-499
3	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY SCHOOLS	Education & Health Services	250-499
4	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	Public Administration	250-499
5	GASTON COLLEGE PREPARATORY	Education & Health Services	250-499
6	NC DEPT OF PUBLIC SAFETY	Public Administration	100-249
7	SMITHFIELD FOODS INC	Manufacturing	100-249
8	FX GEAR	Manufacturing	100-249
9	WEST FRASER INC	Manufacturing	100-249
10	GLOVER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY INC	Construction	100-249

4.1.2 Project Stakeholders

Owners

Local residents Grover and Lucy Edwards purchased the school site from Northampton County Schools in early 2009. At the time of purchase, the Edwards proposed renovating the space into a business center for local small businesses and non-profits. Grover Edwards reported that the property was recently sold to Pastor Tony Butcher of Building Faith Christian Center in Gaston, NC (Edwards, 2018).

Town of Gaston

Town council members may have an interest or need for more office space. Aside from its own needs, the town is needed where it concerns plans, ordinances and legislative authority.

Local Business Owners

Due to the site's location in Gaston's business center, small businesses or non-profits may be interested in utilizing the space for office and/or retail venues.

Community Anchors

Large employers such as Lowe's Distribution, Northampton County Schools and KIPP Gaston College Preparatory could potentially utilize the space for meetings or more specialized projects. For example, the Executive Director of KIPP ENC expressed an interest in turning the property into teacher housing (Sutton, 2017). Organizations such as Teach for America could have great interest in such a project as they have such large teacher presence in Northeastern North Carolina.

Community Members

Gaining insight on the needs and wants of the community is important as they are the people who have to live and exist in the community. Most residents and visitors to the area express their discernment for the area's lack of entertainment, shops, dining options and recreation.

4.1.3 Project Site

The Gaston School is located at 200 School Street in Gaston, Northampton County, North Carolina. The project site (see *Figure 4-1*) is a 12.13-acre campus consisting of approximately 50,000 square feet of school buildings and a 1.5-acre athletic field. The original building was a brick clad, flat-roofed Modernist high school building built in the early 1950s by architect Leslie Boney. Over the next twenty years several additions were made to the school site including a gymnasium, boiler room, cafeteria, multiple classrooms, lobby, home economics and auto shop and library. Around 1990, a new high school was constructed and Gaston School became the middle school. In 2001, a new middle school was constructed and Gaston School was closed by the County's school board. Local residents Grover and Lucy Edwards purchased the school in early 2009. The site was listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the North Carolina Department of

Figure 4-1: Project Site



Figure 4-2: Front Entrance View



Image Source: National Register of Historic Places

Figure 4-3: Rear View



Image Source: National Register of Historic Places

Cultural Resources in April of 2012. The school continues to sit vacant today but the building's interior remains intact.

Physical and Environmental Context

The Gaston School is situated in a largely residential area on the south side of School Street. The main façade (north elevation) is separated from street by a concrete sidewalk. A metal flagpole marks the sidewalk's east end. At the school's west side is a paved driveway. The parcel slopes from north to south towards the Roanoke River. South of the school buildings is an athletic field comprised of a football field and running track. Bleachers, a scoreboard and metal posts were retained on the field. East of the school is another field that formerly contained the elementary school building before it was demolished in the 1990s. The canopy covered concrete walkway that once linked the two buildings still remains.

Gaston School is optimally located a block southwest from the intersection of NC 48 and NC 46, the approximate geographical center of the Town of Gaston. Also in the southwest quadrant of the intersection is Grace Baptist Church, a vacant Shell gas station, Hardee's and Gaston Hardware store. Northwest of the intersection is the Gaston Blue Flame gas station and a recently built Family Dollar store. Perry's Body Shop, Moncure Mobile Homes and a cyber center sits to the northeast of the intersection. To the southeast is a local Italian restaurant, a U-Haul Neighborhood Dealer, the post office, Gaston Market, Dollar General store and other small businesses. Heading north along NC 48 will take you pass KIPP Gaston College Preparatory and other residential areas before entering into Virginia. Further south on NC 48 is the Roanoke River as well as large employers, Georgia Pacific and Kapstone. The police department, city clerk office, civic center and other auto part shops are situated south of the project site before reaching the river.

Figure 4-4: Town Center

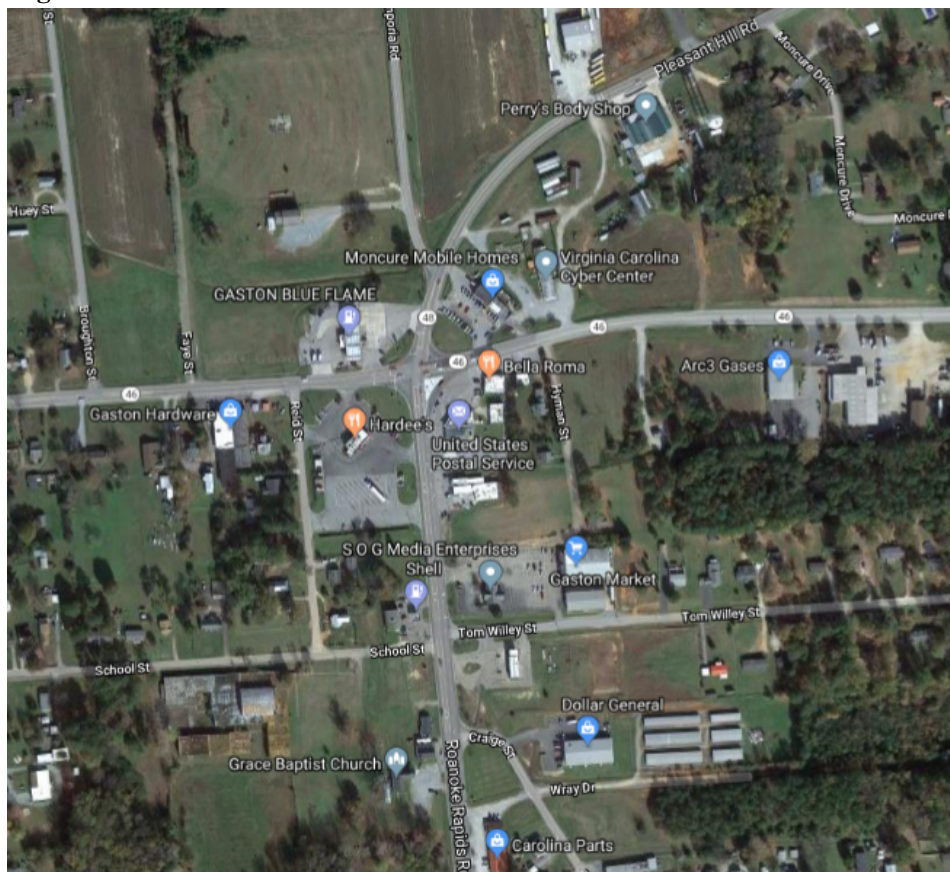


Image Source: Google Maps

4.1.4 Past & Existing Adaptive Reuse Projects

According to the National Register of Historic Places, the owners of Gaston School planned to renovate the school for use as the Gaston Center for Business, a proposed mixed-use development of small businesses and non-profit organizations. Redeveloping the property as teacher housing and plans for a buffet style cafeteria were also considered. However, these plans were never implemented as the previous owners' time and money were tied into another property. According to Mr. Edwards, the Gaston School site was recently sold to Pastor Tony Butcher (Edwards, 2018).

Over the past ten years, four elementary and secondary public schools have been closed in Northampton County due to declining enrollment: Squire Elementary, Garysburg Elementary, Rich Square Creecy Elementary and Northampton County High School West. Despite the closure of these schools, the school buildings have been adaptively reused providing services in education, job training, health and recreation to the surrounding community.

Located about a mile west from the Gaston School site on NC-46 is Squire Elementary School was closed in 2016 and has since been transformed into the Squire Academic Center. The building is now being used for Gaston Pre-K, Gaston Primary School, Northampton County High School Early College and the alternative learning program.

A mile north of the project site was formerly the home of Northampton County High School-West's Hurricanes. While the building is still currently been used as the high school, it is now home to the Jaguars. In 2010, Northampton County High Schools (NCHS-West and NCHS-East) were consolidated. For the first five years, the high school was located in the NCHS-East building while the NCHS-West building became the Gaston Middle School. Today, NCHS is located in the NCHS-West building while the NCHS-East building is shared by the Northampton County Schools' maintenance department and Roanoke-Chowan Community College (Bennett, 2018).

In the next town over, heading east on NC-46, is the old Garysburg Elementary School. Closed in 2009, the former elementary school was purchased by the Town of Garysburg and now serves as Garysburg Community Center, public library and most recently Garysburg Farmer's market. Additionally, the facility is also used for the Town's recreation program, providing a space for the football and basketball leagues to practice and play. The gymnasium/auditorium is oftentimes rented as a venue for entertainment events in the community as well.

Rich Square Creecy Elementary School in Rich Square, NC was also closed in 2009. Since its closure, a local church rents the auditorium and gym and the Town of Rich Square uses the kitchen to provide community meals (Bennett, 2018).

All in all, the repurposing of these recently closed schools exemplify how public schools can still be community anchors even after its closure, especially for small rural towns. Closed schools can not only continue to be places where people educate and learn, but they can provide resources that were once scarce in the community.

4.1.5 Summary of Site and Community Profile

Gaston proves to be a small rural town with a declining population. However, despite this decline in the overall population there is a rising young and minority population. There is a shockingly high vacancy in housing and the economic conditions are not the best but retail, manufacturing and educational services are thriving industries. The project site itself sits a in prime location for small businesses as it's located near the center of town. Northampton County offer several

examples of how to repurpose closed school sites to fit the needs of the community as well as create economic opportunities for the municipality.

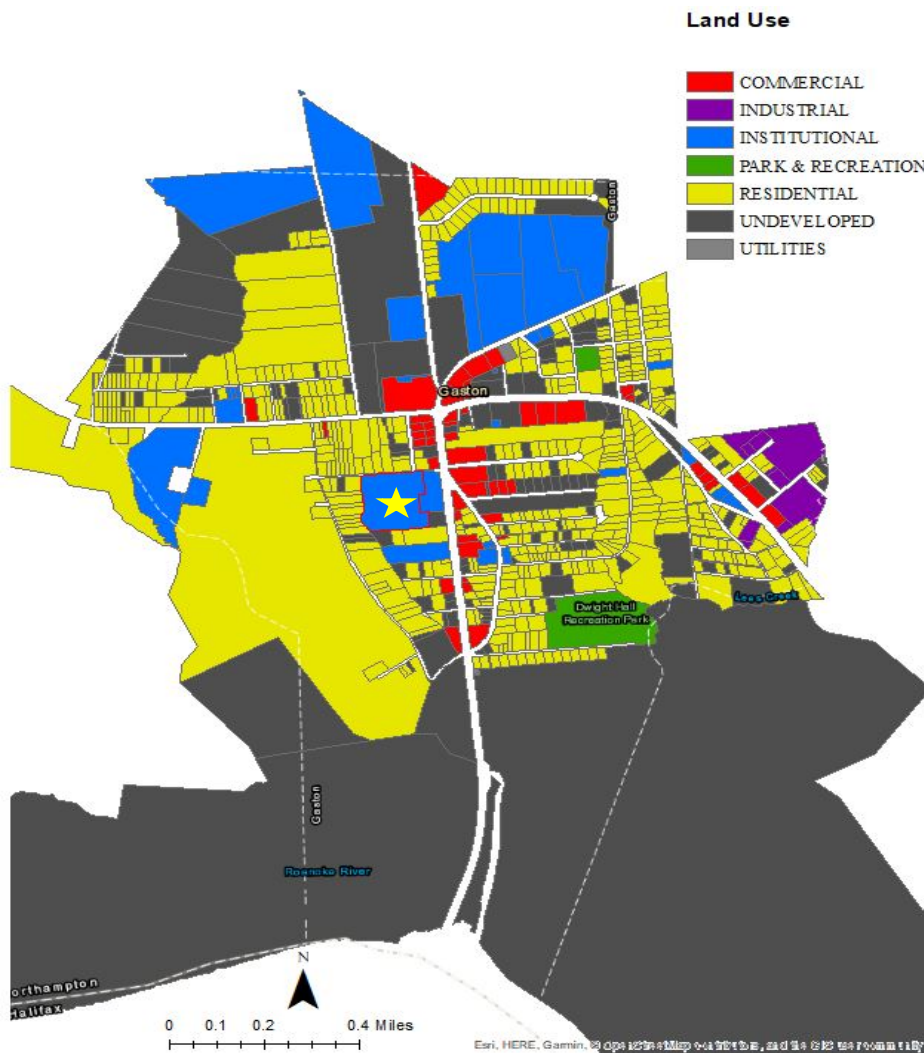
4.2 Parcel Analysis

This analysis contains a summary of observations regarding land use, ownership, and recent sales based on property tax data.

4.2.1 Land Use

Figure 4-5 is a land use map for the Town of Gaston. This map contains all parcels within the city limits of Gaston. Land use are divided into seven categories: Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, Park & Recreation, Residential, Utilities and Undeveloped. The Town of Gaston is primarily residential, specifically single-family households. The next most prevalent land use is undeveloped parcels, which is typical for rural areas. This category consists of cemeteries, landfills, and idle lots. Most of the commercial properties are concentrated around the intersection with a few businesses along NC 48 southbound and NC 46 eastbound. Institutional land uses include: religious, governmental, educational, social and healthcare facilities. Gaston has a significant number of institutions within a such small area. Two parcels are designated as Parks & Recreation, but merely appears as open spaces or undeveloped land.

Figure 4-5: Land Use Map



Institutional land uses include: religious, governmental, educational, social and healthcare facilities. Gaston has a significant number of institutions within a such small area. Two parcels are designated as Parks & Recreation, but merely appears as open spaces or undeveloped land.

4.2.2 Ownership

In order to gauge potential investors, an analysis of property owners was conducted for the Town of Gaston. Table 4-4 lists the top ten owners with multiple properties. Table 4-5 displays owners with highest total property tax values.

Table 4-4: Major Owners by Number of Properties

Rank	Owner	# of Properties	Total Acreage	Total Tax Value
1	WRAY, HAROLD W	24	19.63	\$1,317,677.00
2	CLARY LUMBER CO	14	20.53	\$896,982.00
3	WALL, LINWOOD L JR	8	6.71	\$94,275.00
4	TOWN OF GASTON	8	18.62	\$695,534.00
5	HIGH, SAMUEL F	8	3.05	\$393,173.00
6	ANDERSON, EARL W	8	1.48	\$61,943.00

7	WESTHAMPTON, INC	7	7.49	\$110,783.00
8	BECKER FARMS PROPERTIES LLC	7	3.1	\$253,929.00
9	DUNLOW, DAVID M	7	3.41	\$298,456.00
10	LYERLY, MARY PRISCILLA (GUTHRIE)	7	2.28	\$165,750.00

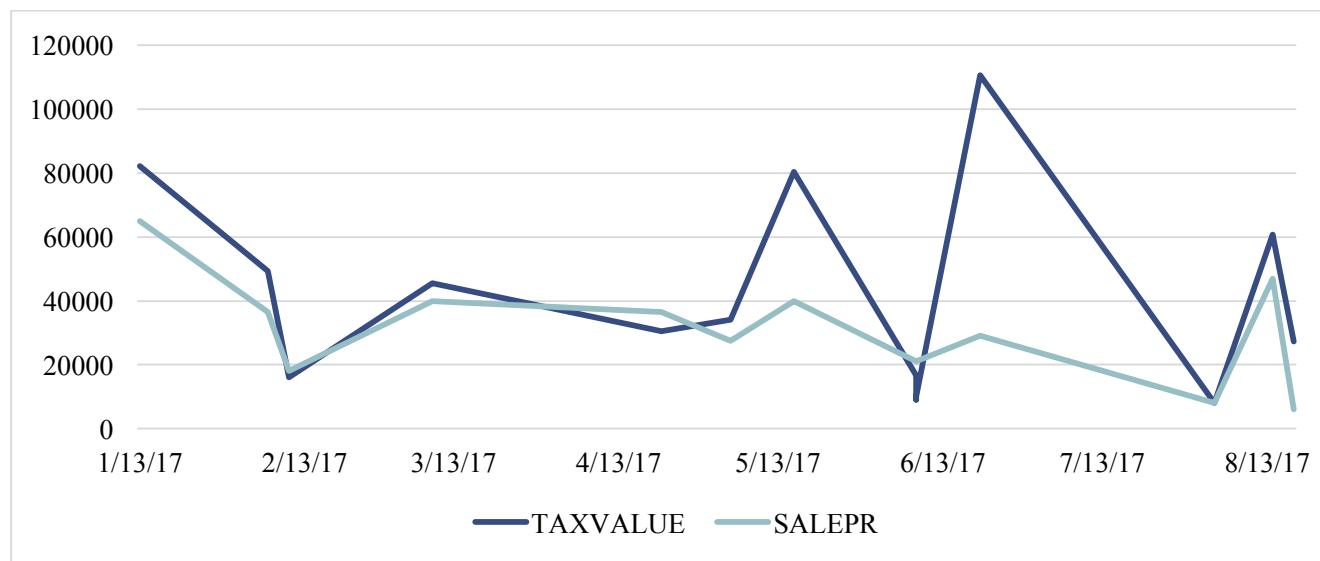
Table 4-5: Major Owners by Total Tax Values

Rank	Owner	# of Properties	Total Acreage	Total Tax Value
1	KIPP GASTON COLLEGE PREPARATORY	5	56.4	\$11,787,994.00
2	NORTHAMPTON, CO BD OF EDUCATION	1	23.96	\$5,899,184.00
3	KAPSTONE KRAFT PAPER CORP	2	1056.36	\$3,151,928.00
4	ROANOKE CHOWAN REGIONAL HGS D	1	21.46	\$2,636,726.00
5	RV HEALTHCARE LLC	1	10.6	\$1,531,951.00
6	WRAY, HAROLD W	24	19.63	\$1,317,677.00
7	COOL SPRING BAPTIST CHURCH	2	19	\$1,215,321.00
8	GASTON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT	2	5.41	\$1,074,202.00
9	CLARY LUMBER CO	14	20.53	\$896,982.00
10	TOWN OF GASTON	8	18.62	\$695,534.00

4.2.3 Recent Sales

Figure 4-6 displays the sales from 2017. There was a total of 14 sales (three on 6/8/17) in the past year. Majority of the sales were for residential properties, one commercial and the remaining were undeveloped parcels. On average, properties had a property tax value of \$41,441 and were sold for \$29,750, a 28% difference. The percentage difference between property tax values and sale prices ranged from -78% to +133%.

Figure 4-6: Town of Gaston Recent Sales (2017)



4.2.4 Summary of Parcel Analysis

The parcel analysis illustrates that residential is the most prominent land use in the Town of Gaston. Trends in ownership reveal that institutional properties are some of the most valuable parcels based on total tax values. Most sales activity have been geared towards residential properties.

4.3 Market Analysis

This report analyzes retail, and residential and office markets for the project site. This report includes key findings from each of these analyses, including definitions of market areas and identification of relevant trends. This section concludes with the markets that appears most viable for the project site based on my analyses.

4.3.1 Retail

A retail marketplace profile was generated in Esri Business Analyst to illuminate the retail demand within 1-, 3- and 5- mile radius surrounding the project site (see *Figure 4-7*). Within a 1-mile radius of the project site there is a surplus in retail trade and food & drink industries. Supply (retail sales) exceeds demand (retail potential) generating a retail gap of \$576,113. Gasoline stations retail sales contributed the most to the surplus factor (see *Figure 4-8*). The Leakage/Surplus Factor presents a snapshot of retail opportunity. This is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total leakage) to -100 (total surplus). A positive value represents 'leakage' of retail opportunity outside the trade area. A negative value represents a surplus of retail sales, a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area (Esri, 2018).

Figure 4-7: Market Study Area

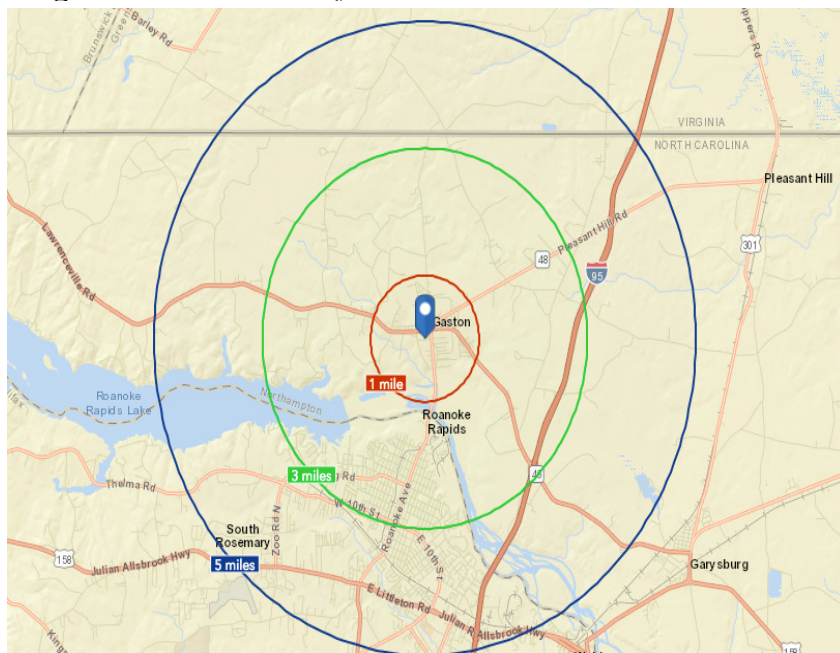
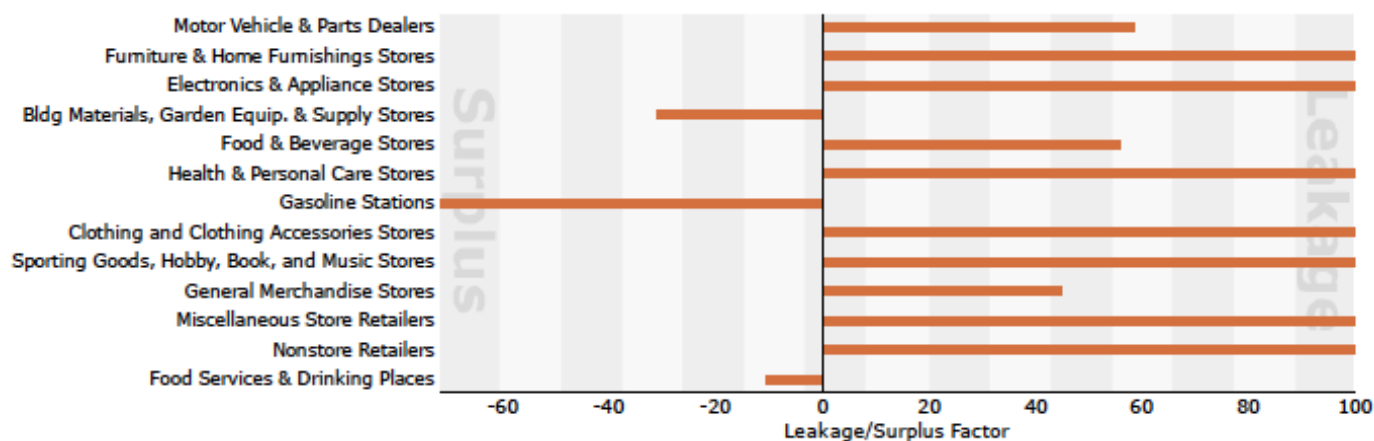


Figure 4- 8: Leakage/Surplus Factor by Industry Subsectors



Graph prepared by Esri

There continues to be leakage of retail and trade and food & drink industries within a 3-mile radius. However, this trend stops within the 5-mile radius, where it becomes a surplus of retail and trade and food & drink industries.

4.3.2 Residential

A housing profile report generated by Esri Business Analyst revealed that within a mile radius of the project site the total population is expected to decline by .63% from 2017-2022. However,

despite a declining population, total housing units are projected to increase by 2022. Interestingly, the estimated number of owner occupied units is expected to decrease, the number of renter occupied will virtually remain the same and the number of vacant units will increase by 2022 (see *Table 4-6* below). Furthermore, median household incomes and home values are expected to increase between 2017 and 2022. The reason for this increase is unknown. However, these trends also remain true for both the 3- and 5- mile radius market areas.

Table 4-6: Housing Units by Occupancy Status and Tenure

Housing Units by Occupancy Status and Tenure	Census 2010		2017		2022	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Housing Units	592	100.0%	608	100.0%	612	100.0%
Occupied	523	88.3%	515	84.7%	497	81.2%
Owner	358	60.5%	334	54.9%	318	52.0%
Renter	165	27.9%	181	29.8%	179	29.2%
Vacant	69	11.7%	94	15.5%	115	18.8%

Table prepared by Esri

According to the housing profile prepared by Esri, there appears to be little to no demand for housing market in the study area. However, based on interviews there is strong interest in teacher housing. Many Northampton County Schools teachers are recruited through Teach for America and finding housing in a small rural town has proven to be difficult for many teachers. So, while the number of vacant homes are expected to increase over the next 5 years, it is not specified which type of homes will become vacant and there is no guaranteed these homes will be demanded by teachers.

4.3.3 Office

Although there is no specific office market profile provided by Esri Business Analyst, office demand has been demonstrated through news articles and conversations with community members. In an article discussing what to do with the Garysburg Elementary School building, a community member mentioned needing a space for the Father Focus Network to meet. “There are members in the group from Northampton but they have to meet Roanoke Rapids Police substation behind CADA in Roanoke Rapids,” he said. “We have fathers and men who could benefit.” (Hough, 2009)

Additionally, Teach for America staff in the area have also expressed a need for office space. Kevika Amar, school leader of KIPP Pride High School in Gaston, NC, reported that “the TFA staff does not have office space in our area and had mentioned how it would be nice to have. They do all their meetings right now at our school, other schools and Starbucks” (Amar, 2018).

Organizations like Father Focus Network and Teach for America that serve Northampton County could benefit from office space at the Gaston School site. There is an apparent leakage of meeting spaces and offices when groups in Northampton County have to cross county lines to meet.

4.3.4 Summary of Market Analysis

Based on data provided by Esri Business Analyst, the most viable market for the Gaston School Site is retail trade and food and drink industries. Given that the town and county population is declining and vacancy is estimated to rise, there is no immediate demand for more residential units. However, there is interest in more specialized housing such as teacher housing in the area. Through conversations with local organizations and community members, there is an apparent and urgent need for office space.

The following section addresses the research questions and provides recommendations for the adaptive reuse of Gaston School.

5.1 Summary of Research Question Findings

First Question: How have closed schools been adaptively reused in Northampton County?

Over the past ten years four public schools have been closed in Northampton County. Two of these schools have continued to be utilized for educational purposes. However, the remaining schools have been repurposed for multiple uses including: a community center, a public library, a farmer's market, recreational facility and additional space for other community groups. Northampton County have used closed schools to capitalize on underutilized space that now acts as a community hub. Based on these findings, one can assume that the adaptive reuse of the Gaston School site is feasible and essential to the development of the Town of Gaston. Utilizing the site could provide resources that the community lacked as well as provide new opportunities in economic and community development.

Second Question: What is the market demand for the Gaston School site?

Based on the market analysis, there is a true demonstrated demand for retail space. The housing market does not call for more housing units largely due to a declining population. However, through interviews and conversations with community members and teachers, there is great interest in teacher housing. Similarly, community members and organizations have spoken out the lack of office and meeting spaces in not only the Town of Gaston but throughout the Northampton County. Thus, the best use for the Gaston School site is a mixed-used development.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Prioritize community needs in decision making process.

To provide a service to a community one must talk to the community to know what services are needed. Data can sometimes be erroneous or miscalculated. However, there is much to gain by simply listening to the community's needs and demands.

Recommendation 2: Take into account major repair costs.

Be aware of the costs of repairs. The property is contaminated with asbestos and has deteriorated due to the lack of upkeep of the building. A thorough inspection of the property is necessary to conclude on how extensive the damage is.

Recommendation 3: Consider available federal and state tax credits and local grants.

NC Historic Preservation Tax Credits piggy backs onto the 20% federal tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings. Owners and developers may receive a 15-25% state tax credit based on tiered basis. For projects up to \$10M in qualified rehabilitation expenditures, the state tax credit is 15%. For projects from \$10 million to \$20 million in qualified rehabilitation expenditures, the state tax credit is 10%. No credit above \$20 million. A 5%

development tier bonus is available for projects in Tier 1 or 2 counties (NCDCR, 2017).

Low Income Housing Tax Credits are available for rental properties made affordable for families and individuals with incomes at or below 60% of the local median income for a period between 15 and 30 years. Owners are eligible to take a tax credit equal to about 9% of the qualified cost of the building or rehabilitating the property. This federal tax credit is available each year for 10 years. Tax credits can be exchanged for equity investments to lower the amount of the property's debt financing. This lowers the operating costs and makes it economically feasible to operate the property at below-market rents (NCHFA, 2018).

Funding through non-profits such as the Golden LEAF Foundation could potentially be available for the county. In 2010, Northampton County was granted \$2 million through the Golden Leaf Community Assistance Initiative program to bolster the county's economy (Martin, 2010).

REFERENCES

- Amar, Kevika. Interview with author. February 6, 2018.
- Bennett, Albert. Interview with author. March 22, 2018.
- Brody, J. (2013). The Neighbourhood Unit Concept and the Shaping of Land Planning in the United States 1912–1968. *Journal of Urban Design*, 18(3), 340-362.
- Cohen, Nevin and Paul Robbins. (2011). "Adaptive Reuse." In *Green Cities: An A-to-Z Guide*, edited by Nevin Cohen and Paul Robbins, 5-7. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011. doi: 10.4135/9781412973816.n2.
- Cranston, Sarah. (2017). School Closures & Community Hubs: Examining Livability in Ontario through School Closures and the Community Hub Framework. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1974/15405>
- Edwards, Grover. Interview with author. March 28, 2018.
- Filion, P. and T. Bunting. (2010). Transition in the city. In *Canadian cities in transition*, eds. T. Bunting, P. Filion and R. Walker. 4th edition. Toronto: Oxford, 39-52.
- Hough, J. (2009). "What to do with Garysburg Elementary School building?". *The Daily Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.rrdailyherald.com/news/what-to-do-with-garysburg-elementary-school-building/article_fa609115-fc9f-512b-9ea4-97fd33d87d8c.html
- Kearns, R., Lewis, N., McCreanor, T., & Witten, K. (2009). "The status quo is not an option": Community impacts of school closures in South Taranaki, New Zealand. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 25(1), 131-140.
- Li, H., & Tsai, T. (2017). Adaptive Reuse Strategies For Historic Old School Building In Taiwan: A Case Study Of PKVS. *International Journal of Organizational Innovation (Online)*, 10(1), 101-109. Retrieved from <http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1932334830?accountid=14244>
- Lytton, M. (2011), "Have all the Costs of Closing a School Been Considered?", CELE Exchange, Centre for Effective Learning Environments, 2011/08, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kg5c8bwqs31-en>
- Martin, L. (2010). "Northampton gets Golden Leaf funds". *RRSpin.com* Retrieved from <https://www.rrspin.com/roanoke-rapids-weldon-halifax-county-nc-news/item/542-northampton-gets-golden-leaf-funds.html>
- Mehaffy, M. W., Porta, S., & Romice, O. (2015). The "neighborhood unit" on trial: a case study in the impacts of urban morphology. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 8(2), 199-217.
- Nart Stas (2007). *The Economics of Adaptive Reuse of Old Buildings: A Financial Feasibility Study & Analysis*. UWSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/10012/2707>

National Register of Historic Places, Gaston School, Gaston, Northampton, North Carolina, National Register #:12000215.

North Carolina Department of Natural & Cultural Resources. (2017). *Historic Preservation Tax Credits for Income-Producing Properties*. North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. Retrieved from http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/TaxCredits/ITA_FactSheet.pdf

North Carolina Housing Finance Agency. (2018). *Low Income Housing Tax Credits*. Retrieved from <https://www.nchfa.com/rental-housing-partners/rental-developers/rental-development-financing-options/low-income-housing-tax-credits>.

People for Education. (2009). *School Closings and Declining Enrolment in Ontario*. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Annual-Report-on-Ontario-Schools-2009.pdf>

Perry, C. (1929). "The Neighborhood Unit: A Scheme of Arrangement for the Family Life Community." In *A Regional Plan for New York and Its Environs*, vii. New York: 1929.

Reycraft, D. (2016). People for Education Media Conference Address. *Community Schools Alliance*. Retrieved from <https://www.communityschoolsalliance.ca/sites/default/files/Media%20Conference%20May%2026%2C%202016.pdf>

Robinson, Jake. "3 Benefits of Adaptive Reuse for Building Projects —." Superdraft. August 17, 2017. Accessed November 16, 2017. <http://www.superdraft.com.au/blogs/3-benefits-of-adaptive-reuse>.

Seaman, M. (2015). New Life for Old Schools: Community, health and heritage- and the closing of historic schools. *Municipal World*, 125(2), 19-22.

Simons, R. & Ledebur, L. & DeWine, G..*Retired, Rehabbed, Reborn: The Adaptive Reuse of America's Derelict Religious Buildings and Schools*. Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2016. *Project MUSE*,

Spector, Stephen. 2003. *Creating Schools and Strengthening Communities Through Adaptive Reuse*. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.

Sutton, Tammi. Interview with author. December 6, 2017.

Vincent, J. (2006). Public schools as public infrastructure: Roles for planning researchers. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 25, 433-437.

DATA SOURCES

Esri Business Analyst - <https://bao.arcgis.com/esriBAO>

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction - <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/accounting/data/>

Northampton County, NC GIS - <http://gis.northamptonnc.com/>

US Census Bureau - <https://www.census.gov/data.html>